

Local Geography



The topography in much of our area is hilly and steep. The foothills of the Olympic Mountains are in the northern part of Grays Harbor County. The Olympic Mountains are wild areas indeed; some areas are thought to have never been explored. Most of this wild land area lies within the borders of Olympic National Park. Elevation ranges from sea level along the Pacific Ocean to about 2,700 feet in the northeastern corner of Grays Harbor County.

To the south of the Olympic Mountains in the southeast corner of Washington is the land area referred to as the Coast Range. The Coast Range runs south into Oregon. The most notable features of the Coast Range in Washington are the Willapa Hills which overlook Willapa Bay in Pacific County.

Western and Southwestern Washington is drained by eleven major river systems: the Chehalis, Columbia, Elochoman, Grays, Humptulips, Naselle, North, Satsop, Willapa, Wishkah, and Wynoochee Rivers. The majority of the population and agricultural centers are located in the flood plains of these rivers and along the extensive coastal lowlands.



The original vegetation in the area was conifers; Grays Harbor and Pacific Counties were, and are, home to some of the greatest forests in North America. The first sawmill was built near Grays Harbor in the early 1880's. Since then, the lumber industry has dominated the development and economy of the area. Virgin Douglas-fir, Sitka spruce, and western redcedar were logged. Lumber from the forests supplied local needs and those of the rapidly expanding market for building materials in the early West. While the lumber industry remains a major force in our local economy, tourism, fishing and light industry have become increasingly important economic sectors.